

Friday Sermon: Building of Mosques -- An Ahmadiyya Priority

May 17th, 2013

After tashhud, tawwuz and recitation of Sura Al-Fatiha, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (may Allah strengthen him with His Mighty Help) recited verse 18 of Sura Al Tauba, Chapter 9 of the Holy Quran:

He alone can keep the Mosques of Allah in a good and flourishing condition who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and observes Prayer, and pays the Zakat, and fears none but Allah; so these it is who may be among those who reach the goal.

Today, by the Grace of Allah, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at of British Columbia has been blessed with the ability to build a mosque. Some of the Ahmadi families have been living here for the last 40 and perhaps even 50 years. Many have certainly been here for at least 25 or 30 years but you have been able to build the mosque here only now.

A center did exist and a hall where prayers were offered and people could meet and perhaps this was the reason why you were not able to devote full attention to the work of building a mosque proper.

To some extent the needs of meeting together, and training members were being met, yet a mosque has its own importance and significance. The minarets, the dome and the very shape of a mosque leaves an impress on the members of the Jama'at as well as on the surroundings and the rest of the members of the society also.

Where a mosque comes into being, new avenues for the introduction of Islam to others are opened up and new opportunities arise for conveying the message of Islam to the broader society. This is the reason why the Promised Messiah (as) has so strongly drawn our attention to the building of mosques and said that in this way not only the unity of the Jama'at would be promoted but also the work of conveying the message of Islam would be greatly enhanced as a result.

It is true that he has said that it does not matter if the mosque built is a humble and simple structure but it is important that a mosque be built.

Some people may be thinking, therefore, what is the need for us to build such grand mosques especially as the demands from many Jama'ats are coming that mosques should be built there also and some of them do not have the capacity to do it on their own and so the national headquarters has to help them. So the thought might come that if smaller mosques are built then in the same amount of money more mosques could be built. But if we keep in mind a fundamental principle then perhaps this question would not arise and that principle is enshrined in the saying of the Holy Prophet (sa):

Inna mal a'maalo bin-niy-yaat; meaning that the reward of any deed is based on the intention behind the action.

Vancouver is the biggest city of British Columbia and this is where the largest number of Ahmadis of BC live and based on the number of Ahmadis living in BC this is not really a very big mosque. And then, when we look at the Grace of Allah, the Exalted, and the manner in which the avenues for conveying the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat are being opened up, they also demand from us that our places be large and spacious. Then our places need to be expansive also on the basis of this revelation of the Promised Messiah (as), “was-say a makanaka,” in which Allah directed him to expand his house and make it more spacious.

This revelation however does not only mean that we make our houses more spacious so that more and more guests can be easily accommodated therein when they come to visit or attend the Jalsas but we need our mosques also to be more and more spacious.

Then in this age in which we live, the Promised Messiah (as) has been addressed by Allah as “Ibraheem” and it was through Hazrat Ibraheem (as) that Allah had built the Khana Ka’aba. For the establishment of the Unity of God, the First House of Allah built for His worship was again reconstructed and repaired through Hazrat Ibraheem (as).

And in accordance with the promises of Allah it will be through the Promised Messiah (as) that this world will come to know, and indeed is getting to know, and there is no doubt in this, that Islam’s rejuvenation will occur through the Promised Messiah (as). And in a spiritual sense, in this age, the purpose behind the building of the Khana Ka’aba will be fulfilled through the Promised Messiah (as) and the world shall come to know and recognize this.

The purpose for the building of mosques is that people should gather together to worship the One God and from this point of view also we need to give attention to the building of mosques.

So, as I said, the real thing, in accord with the directives of the Holy prophet (sa), is the intention behind any action and our intention is to work to establish the Unity of God, and to spread His message and to gather the largest numbers of people under the flag of His Unity and Oneness and to bring about a revolutionary improvement in the condition of our own selves and our progenies and by doing so make ourselves and our children bow down in front of God.

We have to make use of every effort to establish Salat and fill the mosques for this purpose in such a way that they begin to appear to be too small.

So when this is the intention, then even seemingly large mosques will not appear to be just for the purpose of show but rather will be large for the purpose of winning the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted and insha-Allah, I am convinced that those of you who live in this area, who are going to populate this mosque, if you will discharge your responsibilities with such intentions, then while you will be succeeding in spreading the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat, you will also simultaneously be advancing spiritually, and by uniting your children with the One God you will become the ones who will improve their lives here and Hereafter.

You also shall be gaining the pleasure of Allah and see the bounties of Allah rain down upon you. And when the Grace of Allah begins to rain down upon people, when the intention is purely to win His pleasure, then in each city Allah bestows upon the people the ability to build several mosques.

So now your intention should be that we will not wait another 30 or 40 years before building the next mosque but shall go on making this and many other similar mosques that shall be built to become too small to accommodate all the worshipers.

By populating mosques, by fulfilling the requirements of worshipping God, and in accord with His directives by making our lives fully in line with His teachings we shall make the increasing needs to expand our mosques a way to draw upon ourselves more and more blessings of Allah and make this a way to go on gaining every day more and more Grace of God.

So if we are inaugurating this mosque with this intention then certainly we are making an attempt to make up for not having built this mosque for such a long time. And those areas where there are still no mosques built, there also, with the inauguration of this mosque, attention to this important task will be drawn and this will also serve to make up for the long time it took you to build this mosque.

Always remember, as I have said before, that a mosque has its own importance and significance and centers and mission houses or halls cannot attain that stature which a mosque enjoys.

Yes, it is true that a hall or center allows the Jama'at to have a place to get together but the spiritual connection that one gains by being in a mosque and the emotions that are evoked by a mosque; those cannot come into being without a proper mosque. This is a part of human nature if you will. So where ever lands have been bought, make proper mosques instead of making halls or centers. I heard about a place in Canada where they had some land and they had decided to build a hall with the money they had but I am grateful to Allah, the Exalted, that they changed their decision when they were asked to look at the matter again. May Allah bless all those places that are considering to make mosques that they be able to build mosques.

It is certainly true that once mosques are built then new avenues open up for conveying the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat. At the end of March I inaugurated the mosque in Valencia, Spain and now reports are reaching me that non Muslims are making inquiries about Islam and also non Ahmadi Muslims are coming to offer their prayers and gaining knowledge about the Jama'at. Insha-Allah, from among such people those blessed with righteous, blessed souls shall be granted the ability to accept the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat and enter in its fold.

From among the duties that Allah, the Exalted, has assigned to the Promised Messiah (as) one is that the Muslims be informed about the true teachings of Islam and that they be gathered on that Islam that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) had brought and that that Sharia should be promoted which had been revealed to him.

Allah, the Exalted, had directed the Promised Messiah (as) through revelation, “Gather all the Muslims on the face of the Earth on the One True Religion.” Explaining this the Promised Messiah (as) says: That this command to gather together all the Muslims that are living on the face of the Earth is a special kind of directive. Then, citing the example of Hazrat Ibraheem (as), the Promised Messiah (as) stated that as Allah had commanded the fire to become cool and a means of security for him and that exactly had come about, so this command seems to me to be of this same type.

That Allah desires that the Muslims living on this Earth should be gathered together on the one true religion and this shall indeed come to pass and they shall indeed become gathered so together. But this does not mean that there would be absolutely no differences left among them. Indeed differences shall remain but they shall not be such as would be considered worthy of note or mention.

So now the way to guidance for all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, is through the Promised Messiah (as) alone. In this country, and in this city, hundreds of thousands of Muslims live and certainly this mosque will draw their attention also and the construction of this mosque will draw positive and negative commentary from Muslims and non-Muslims alike and this will lead to many new opportunities for conveying the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat and you will have to prepare yourselves for this also. So the building of this mosque will continue to increase your responsibilities one after the other.

Clearly when you will prepare yourself to convey the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat, you will have to improve your personal moral qualities as well as improving your knowledge of matters related to the faith. And this is essential. If you do not do this then because of the lack of accord between your words and deeds no one will even want to come close to you. So the building of mosques leads to doors opening for persons to draw upon themselves the blessings of God which continue to increase the faith of a believer continuously. And there are also blessings that the whole Jama'at draws upon itself by building mosques to such a degree that boggles the mind.

Allah has discussed the subject of mosques in several places in the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran addresses the topic of respect and honor due to mosques. It addresses the topic of purpose of mosques and it has laid bare the characteristics of those who populate the mosques of Allah. Right now the verse of the Holy Quran that I have recited in front of you discusses those who populate the mosques.

The first thing stated is that those who populate who come to the mosques are those who believe in Allah. But just saying that we believe in Allah is not sufficient. The faith mentioned here also has some standards that Allah has mentioned. Allah, the Exalted, says that if you will establish these standards of faith, then alone will you be counted as being among those who are perfect in their faith otherwise your faith shall not be perfect.

For example Allah, the Exalted, says in the Holy Quran [49:15], “qaalatil a'raabo aamanna,” meaning, “the Arabs of the desert say, ‘We believe’ - but Allah says, “Qul lam to'minoo wa lakin qoolo aslamna,” meaning, “Say, “You have not believed yet; but rather say, ‘We have accepted Islam.’”

So Allah told the Prophet to tell them to not say that they have believed but to say instead that they have become apparently obedient, and this could be for a variety of reasons. So reciting the Kalima and then making progress in one's state of belief, and developing stronger link with God and paying attention in ones worship, being ever ready to make any kind of sacrifice in order to win the pleasure of Allah, and making such sacrifices, acting on all His commandments; these are the real things which one has to do after accepting Islam and which must exist in a momin, a true believer. These have to be in the person who has accepted the Imam of the Age and has become an Ahmadi. In other words an Ahmadi must show in new splendor these signs of his faith every day. A person must feel these things within himself.

In this regard the Promised Messiah (as) says that 'the momins, the believers are those people whose actions bear witness to their inner beliefs. Their faith is inscribed on their hearts. And they make the winning of the pleasure of God the most important thing and assign this the highest priority over all other things. And they adopt the fine and narrow paths of taqwa, righteousness, for His sake. They become totally consumed in His love. And every idol that comes in their way as an obstacle whether it be a moral lapse or some other sort of weakness or failing they take themselves far away from any such thing.'

So these are the standards that we have to adopt and aim to achieve. And when we will have attained these standards only then will we be those who can rightly call themselves as those who have believed in God.

This definition that the Promised Messiah (as) has made that one should adopt the fine narrow paths of taqwa, of righteousness, these are the paths which require that we discharge the obligations due from us to God and to His creatures and to subject every limb and part of your body to the commandments of Allah.

While you prevent every limb and body part from committing any wrong or evil deed you must also make sure to keep your thinking totally pure and free from any and every impurity and if you do this then in worship, in salat, your attention will remain focused on Allah, the Exalted and then also you will have success in establishing Salat.

If your thoughts are all tangled up in the world and its pleasures then you cannot maintain your focus on God in your prayers. Such a one may apparently be saying his prayers but his thoughts are wandering somewhere else.

Then the promised Messiah (as) said that those who remain totally engaged in the love of God are the true momins, the true believers.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) has described this as one characteristic of a momin that from one Salat till the next his heart continues to be stuck in the mosque. Such a one is waiting from the time of the last prayer till the time for the next comes so he can return to the mosque.

Now worldly tasks are also necessary for a man and the Promised Messiah (as) has made this very clear to us and has told us that the person who does not duly discharge those duties that are in his care is also answerable.

It does not matter what kind of work it is, whether it is business, or labor or farming or anything, whatever it may be. The only thing is that even while engaged in these duties, he must all the time remember God and if he will remember God then such a one will feel and sense that these worldly tasks are also being undertaken and carried out with the command of God and so the person will try and discharge those duties with faithfulness and full honesty.

And such a one will try and not take any kind of wrong or unlawful advantage from such situations. The worldly activities of such a person then also become classified as a part of his spiritual, religious activities because such a one always has in his mind the winning of God's pleasure and the remembrance always of His name.

The lofty examples that the Sahaba, the Companions of the Holy Prophet established for us were not just so that we may enjoy hearing of their actions and examples. Their purpose was not to be lauded for their loft exemplary deeds. They are not in any need of our admiration or compliments, Allah Himself has lauded them and gave them His own certificate that Allah was well pleased with them. So remember that the one with whom Allah is pleased, such a one is in need of no man that he should laud him or praise him.

But yes their examples guarantee that if you walk in their footsteps and follow their examples and discharge all your worldly duties keeping in mind that your purpose is to please Allah alone then Allah will also place you among those who walk along the pathways that lead to His pleasure.

The Promised Messiah (as) said that if you wish to attain to the high stages of belief, then you must try to attain to the highest levels of moral qualities also. And the way you can judge your level of high morals is by looking at your discharge of duties you owe to your fellow human beings. So just offering prayers, and in your own mind discharging the duties you owe to God is not sufficient in attaining the nearness of God. It is essential for a believer in fact to also discharge the rights of the society among whom he lives.

Then the Promised Messiah (as) said that you must also safeguard yourself against laziness and lethargy because this also takes one away from God. Much of the time when you ask those who have difficulty offering their five daily prayers, and I do ask many such people, you find them saying that they feel lazy and do not take the necessary care. This laziness makes one also negligent of the love of God and this carelessness, negligence, slowly but surely takes one away, far away, from the faith also and one also loses the fear of the Day of Judgment and the fear of the coming of the day of reckoning and having to present oneself in front of God.

This is why Allah has mentioned faith in the Hereafter as one of the characteristics of those who populate the mosques who come to the mosques regularly. This is why we are taught that we will get the reward of the things we do in this world in the Hereafter.

Those acts of worship carried out purely for the sake of winning the pleasure of Allah, and having faith in God in this world and getting oneself counted amongst the believers will yield its fruits in the Hereafter by making one inherit paradise.

Then it is said that those who come to the mosques regularly and offer their five daily prayers also offer financial sacrifices too. They spend their wealth in the way of Allah to seek His pleasure.

By the Grace of Allah the Ahmadiyya Jama'at is extraordinary in its zeal for making financial sacrifices for the sake of Allah. At the least there is a group that makes amazing extraordinary sacrifices. In the construction of this mosque there are members who have sacrificed hundreds of thousands of dollars. When it comes to the construction of mosques even non-Ahmadi Muslims make great sacrifices but the hallmark of the Ahmadi is that he makes the constant sacrifice to pay the regular chandas, contributions, as well as participating in whatever special schemes or projects are presented to them. This is why their sacrifices occupy a high level of importance and worth and especially so in today's materialistic world and more so because of the current economic conditions. May Allah bless without end, the persons and possessions of all these who made these sacrifices.

But I want you all to remember that just one action is not enough to enable you to achieve the heights of righteousness or taqwa or make your faith perfect. Indeed for a momin, a true believer, it is necessary that he discharge both his obligations to God and to God's creatures.

In other places, the Holy Quran has indicated many other attributes of those who believe, a few of which I shall shortly mention because only by adopting these can one be properly called a person who has been guided to the right path and be called one who has discharged the obligations due a mosque.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

wal-lazeena aamanoo ashad-do hub-ban lil-lah [2:16] those who are momins, believers, they love Allah the most.

The Promised Messiah (as) says that, "the height of love is worship and this is why the word 'mohabbat' or love is special to God alone."

Then he says that, "worship consists of two parts. The one where he fears God as God should be feared. Thus the true fear of God takes a man towards the fountain of purity and his soul melts and flows towards God and the true color of servitude develops in it."

So this is one part that has to do with fear which causes the heart to melt and a man prostrates himself before God as a consequence and tries to discharge the obligation of worshipping God and he tries to become a true servant of God.

Then the Promised Messiah (as) says, "The other part of worship is that man should love God as God merits being loved. This is why it is said, "wal-lazeena aamanoo ashad-do hub-ban lil-lah" [2:166]. So that recognizing all worldly loves to be temporary and transient, one declares God to be the only true object of one's love. These are the two rights that Allah asks of man with respect to Himself. For the proper discharge of both these types of obligations that man owes to God for His worship, although every worship has its own color, yet Islam has set two different types of worship."

“Fear and love are two things that it seems impossible to have together..how can a person who fears someone also love such a one. But the fear of God and His love have a totally different kind of color. The degree to which a man advances in his fear of God, to that same degree his love for God will also increase. And similarly the degree to which he advances in his love for God to that same degree he shall increase in his fear of God and this fear shall dominate him and prevent him from committing any evil deed by making him hate such things and take him towards a more and more pure state.”

So this is the state which a true momin, a believer, has to acquire.

The Promised Messiah (as) goes on to then describe these loves and says that to develop fear one needs to turn to prayers and to develop love one needs to undertake the worship of Hajj, or pilgrimage ...but that is another long topic.

So this is the state which a true momin, a believer, has to acquire. So that the fear of God should become a means of winning His love and when one acquires this stage or status then man becomes a true worshiper, a true servant and becomes one who can be said to be discharging the obligations due to a mosque from a believer. And this is the stage that the promised Messiah (as) wishes to see develop in every single person who has accepted him.

So with the construction and building of this mosque we need to carry out an inspection, an analysis of ourselves, and determine to what extent we are discharging the obligation of worshiping God; and determine to what extent we are fulfilling the demands that we love God; and see to what extent we are fulfilling the obligations and duties each of us has on the other because the dues of worship cannot be fulfilled without taqwa, righteousness and this we cannot acquire till we fulfill and act on all the commandments of God.

Allah has given us countless commandments to guide us in the Holy Quran and a momin is required to fulfill them and then only can he be called a guided one. Before I mention a few of these let me make clear one thing in the verse that I recited. There it is said,

fa asaa oola'eka anyaqoono minal muhtadeen [9:18]

meaning, “..so these it is who may be among those who reach the goal.”

This does not mean that if they do these things then PERHAPS they will be counted as being those who are rightly guided.

This is not the meaning, that if they do these things with good intentions then PERHAPS they may be considered as having reached their goal etc. This is not the case. Those who know the Arabic idiom know that when the word ‘asaa’ [perhaps or maybe] is used for God then it means that for those people who are solid in their faith, participate in Zakat and other financial sacrifices for the sake of winning Allah’s pleasure, they fear none else than God, then such are certainly guided in the sight of Allah and the coming to the mosque of such a one and offering his prayers and acting on all of Allah’s commands will continue to cause their faith and level of taqwa to continue to rise.

So fortunate are those among us who, by being counted by Allah as being amongst those who are deemed guided, and becoming His, are increasingly getting closer and closer to God.

Let me now also mention one or two responsibilities that Allah has placed on us.

Allah the Exalted says [3:11]

“You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah.”

In this verse Allah has mentioned the qualities of a true Muslim that he enjoins good and forbids evil and this work cannot be done until a man's deeds and words match each other perfectly. If our actions are different from our talk then our speeches will not even have any impact on our own people let alone them having any effect on others.

By having built this mosque, as I have said, the avenues of conveying our message to others shall open up but if our actions are not as they ought to be, as God has mentioned them, then neither are we the best people, nor is our faith in Allah true. And our prayers serve no purpose and our financial sacrifices will not find acceptance of God and neither will our claim be true that we have the fear of God in our hearts.

So it is our foremost duty that we mold ourselves in line with the commandments of God.

Another commandment of God is:

[2:84] wa qoolu lin nasay husna

Speak and deal with the people with kindness.

The very first demonstration of this must be among our own selves and especially the officeholders needs to pay attention to this. Before we go out and convey the message, we have first to fill our mosques with such righteous worshippers who, for the sake of Allah, are those who fulfill the right due to God vis-a-vis His worship.

Sometimes I receive complaints that some officeholders have attitudes, or some who imagine themselves at such elevated stages of righteousness, and talk with the people in a way that causes them emotional pain and thus drives them away from the Jama'at. Such people then instead of helping populate the mosques become the means of making them abandoned. So to become the best people, first it is necessary that we reform ourselves.

Then, as has always happened with the building of mosques, new ways of conveying the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat open up and here also this will happen. So when the people come to see the mosque, or among your own friends and acquaintances, you need to go on developing and strengthening this effect that Ahmadis are always dedicated to doing good for others.

This is the impact and feeling that we must have and establish in the world about an Ahmadi. This is the teaching of Islam that instead of thinking of our own good and benefit we think

first of what is of benefit to others. And not just think of this, but we show it by our practical actions, and now that this mosque has been built people will see this more and more.

Allah, the Exalted, is opening up ways for us to convey the message of Islam-Ahmadiyyat. Sometimes such astounding contacts and connections are made which could not be the result of anyone's efforts and you will see here also that such contacts will be made. So by your actions and words win over these contacts to the love of Islam and its teachings.

So, as I said, your own dealings with each other of love for the sake of winning the pleasure of Allah should go on growing and you should all devote special attention to this also as this is also very essential for us to be able to successfully convey our message and for the strengthening of the Jama'at also it is most essential and it is also essential if one is to win the pleasure of Allah.

May it be that by the building of this mosque the Jama'at becomes stronger internally also and becomes such as acts on the injunctions and commandments of Allah and such as attends and populates the mosques and may the hearts of every one of you be always stuck in the mosque in the same way as the Holy Prophet (sa) has wished of a true momin. May this mosque be such as would capture the Grace of God and may everyone who comes here share in this and may the doors of conveying the message of Islam Ahmadiyyat keep on opening as a consequence of this mosque having been built.

Let me now mention some data relating to this mosque. These may not be of too much interest to the local people but the people around the world watching I am sure would like to hear them.

The announcement of this mosque's construction was made in 1997 by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (ra) and he also named it at that time as Masjid Baitur Rahman. It is situated on roughly 3.75 acres of land and has a covered area of 33,419 sq ft. It has two floors and a dome that is 47 ft high and a minaret that is 76 ft high. At the moment both the men and women's halls are combined and this combined area is 6,800 sq ft. and in this combined hall a total of 1,132 people can offer prayers. There is an ample parking lot that can accommodate 140 cars. There is also a multi-purpose hall in which 1,050 people can offer prayers - so altogether more than 2,000 people can offer prayers in the mosque. There is also a library, a tabligh/outreach center, a kitchen, a funeral home service area, four classrooms, number of offices, a boardroom, a missionary's residence, and a guest house. They have done some very beautiful calligraphy on the mosque. The total cost of the project, including some extra costs that became necessary, stands at C\$8.5 million.

May Allah bless this mosque for you all in every way.

In the end I want to read out a short excerpt from the writings of the Promised Messiah (as). He says:

“The true beauty of mosques is not in their building structures but in fact it is with those worshipers who offer their prayers in them with full sincerity. Without such people these mosques are lying abandoned. The mosque of the Holy Prophet (sa) was a small and its roof

was made of date palm branches and water would leak onto its floor when it would rain. But the

glow and atmosphere of a mosque is with its worshipers. In the time of the Holy Prophet (sa) some worldly minded people made a mosque which was brought down by the command of God. The name of that mosque was Masjid Zarar. This mosque was brought down. The commandment with regard to mosques is that they should be built for the purpose of taqwa, righteousness.”

So this is what every Ahmadi must keep in mind.

The Promised Messiah (as) goes on to say:

“The Jama’at should have its own mosque in which there should be an Imam of our own Jama’at who should advise and guide the people and the members of the Jama’at should all get together to offer their prayers in this very mosque. There is great blessing in Jama’at and unity and much confusion arises of disunity. And this is the time when unity and togetherness needs to be promoted and minor small differences should be overlooked which cause disunity.”

May Allah enable us to mold our lives in accordance with these instructions. Ameen!